

VII

BAUDELAIRE'S NEUROSIS

WHEN we consider the progress made in the study of man's unconscious mind since the days of the proponents of psychiatry, we feel that the time has come to use in the field of literary criticism some of the methods related to psychoanalysis. We fully realize that the works of many writers do not lend themselves to this type of research, but, on the other hand, the works of others, poets especially, would be better understood if it were possible to take soundings in their unconscious. Behind Baudelaire's very interesting life—the darkest corners of which are still unknown in spite of the research done by scores of competent critics—lies a secret life which is just beginning to be brought to light.

There are three sides to Baudelaire's neurosis: his complex about women; his remorse and masochism; his solitude and ennui. Each one grew out of an Oedipus complex, the existence of which cannot be denied. We find in his childhood all the elements needed to explain the psychic civil war which tortured his mind for forty years. His ancestry predisposed him to neurosis, and he had the nervous temperament and extreme sensitiveness usually found in children born of old parents. At the age of twenty, he had already received two psychic traumatic shocks: one dealt by the remarriage of his mother; the other by the venereal disease contracted through his first mistress.

Even before his father's death in 1827, he adored his mother. His abnormal passion stands out in the lines of this

letter to her: "I believe you love me passionately . . . there was in my childhood a period of passionate love toward you. . . . To me, it was the marvelous time of your motherly tenderness . . . I was always alive in you; you were exclusively mine; you were at the same time my idol and my pal. . . . Later on, you know what distasteful education your husband forced on me. I am forty now, and I cannot remember boarding schools without terror. The same is true of the fear my step-father inspired in me. At last, I ran away, and from that time on I was completely rejected!"

There is no use to quibble: the terms he uses are the very ones an old lover would use in writing a mistress he still cherishes. We find in these lines the main elements of the Oedipus complex: on one side, an emotional fixation on his mother; on the other, hostility toward his step-father; finally, flight to escape these feelings which, though repressed in his unconscious, were the dynamic forces of his destiny.

His twenty-one months of solitude with a devoted mother during her first widowhood had created in the six-year-old child the feeling that she belonged exclusively to him as he belonged exclusively to her. When unexpectedly she married again, his whole sense of security was shattered by an intruder, and, from that time on, he never felt secure, never experienced again a sense of permanency in his mother's home. The defiance he felt toward his step-father reveals his desperate distress. Since our conscious tends to push back into the unconscious all impressions that are disagreeable to us, the child whose entire world had just crumbled tried to repress the antithetic sentiments which stirred in his mind.

The overtone of sentimentality of Baudelaire's early childhood was replaced by a feeling of self-pity which eventually was to turn into masochism; unconsciously he yearned for suffering and pain; he cherished them; later on, his tortures,

be they real or imaginary, became a vital element which he could not do without. Unfortunate circumstances fed his thirst for suffering and increased the hostility he felt toward his step-father. For ten years, General Aupick who, perhaps, was as jealous of his stepson as the latter was of him, kept the child away from his mother by sending him to boarding school. Then, when Baudelaire wanted to start on his literary career, the general forced him to study for the entrance examinations to the *École des Chartes*. His hostility grew, eventually including his mother who, through weakness, had, all these years, allowed a stranger to order him around and to dispose of his existence in such an arbitrary manner.

Also, he ascribed to the general's influence and to his mother's weakness, the decision taken by the family council to ship him to India, and, later on, the decision to have the court retrieve what was left of his fortune and to appoint a guardian to take care of it. Psychiatrists tell us that any repressed tendency has to explode some day; the moral imprint had been sufficiently powerful during childhood to censor Baudelaire's growing hostility which finally exploded. A very painful scene took place between the two men during a formal dinner at the general's home. Later, during the revolutionary days of 1848, by a phenomenon of transference of affect, his hatred for his step-father was transferred to the government of King Louis-Philippe who had covered General Aupick with honors. We know that repressed feelings may bring in some children such an unconscious hatred that they come to the point where they not only wish for the disappearance of their tormentor, but even entertain thoughts of murder. It is true that they will rarely kill their father or mother, because they are so strongly stamped by religious and moral laws that such thoughts are censored, but a transference takes place which explains why, later in life, they

will commit some crime which seems to illustrate what André Gide calls "un acte gratuit," a gratuitous act. When, on February 24, 1848, Baudelaire helped to plunder a gunsmith shop and fired a stolen rifle, it was not to help the republicans, since he felt that democracy was an obstacle to the development of arts and meant an intellectual leveling on the lowest possible plane; it was really to satisfy his hatred against his step-father that he took part in the riots, and his friends have related how he kept on yelling, "Let's go shoot General Aupick!" When the general died in 1857, Baudelaire's reaction is well revealed in this sentence from a letter to his mother: "The first thought that struck me at the time of his death was that, from now on, I was the one entrusted by nature with your happiness."

All his life, the poet's feelings toward his mother were of a contradictory type; on the one hand, he kept on adoring her with the complete devotion he had for her when he was six; on the other hand, he included her in the hatred he bore her husband. He never forgave her betrayals: her remarriage, and the important part she had played in the appointment of his guardian. This rancor explains this well-known remark of his: "A woman does not remarry when she has a son like me!" Most adults never outgrow the tendency they have in their childhood to believe that, if someone does not love them as they feel they should be loved, they can make that person change by punishing her for it. That tendency explains Baudelaire's cruelty toward his mother, the continuous reproaches in his letters to her, his constant appeals for money; and it may be one of the imponderable reasons which prompted him to live with a colored woman. As would a spoiled child, he found delight in doing every shameful thing which would hurt his parents or would bring disgrace upon them. His hatred for his mother exploded in *Bénédiction*

(Blessing), the very piece he used as a prologue to *Les Fleurs du Mal*:

When, through a decree of powers supreme,
The poet appeared in this world of ennui,
His fearful mother hurled blasphemies
And clenched her fist toward a woeful God:

.....

"Since, of all women, you have chosen me
To be loathed by my saddened husband,
And I can't throw back into searing flames,
As a stale love note, this ill-thriven monster,

I shall squirt your crushing hatred back
On this cursed instrument of your wickedness;
So cruelly shall I stun that wretched tree
That it will never burst its stinking buds."

Thus she choked down the froth of her hatred.
And stupidly blind to eternal designs,
She herself prepared, in the depths of Hell,
The pyre erected for maternal crimes.

.....

This bitter denunciation of his mother illustrates how closely related adoration and hatred were in his soul, since he never ceased cherishing her. However, this hatred was but one complementary side of his Oedipus complex: the unconscious incestuous tendency of this complex brought to a head a terrific psychic conflict while he was a student in the Latin Quarter. For nearly two years he led a dissolute life, spending a great part of his time in disorderly houses; but the inmates of those places as well as his companions were astonished by the reserve he showed in their company. Quite good-looking, young, with nice manners, he would have been welcomed by many girls as a lover, yet he took as a mistress a horrible street walker. Because the idea of original sin remained deeply imbedded in Baudelaire's mind, even during the years when he did not pray, incest was a latent torment in his unconscious mind and opposed an un-

surmountable barrier to any normal manifestation of manhood. Such psychic conflicts take place outside the conscious and the victim is aware of nothing but the impotence resulting from them. If the poet showed such an astonishing reserve in the disreputable places he frequented, it was because his Oedipus complex made him unconsciously find his mother in every woman he coveted. Automatically, this image set in motion the censorship which put a stop to any sexual activity.

All critics have used Baudelaire's thirst for horrid things to explain his liaison with Sarah, the cross-eyed prostitute whose nickname was Louchette. François Porché in *Histoire d'une Âme* is the first one who showed enough broad-mindedness and comprehension of psychiatry to explain it by saying that, with her, the poet was no longer a victim of the cruel inhibition which held him back with others. Dr. René Laforgue, a well known French psychoanalyst, remarks in *La Psychanalyse et les névroses*: "Always, in neuroses, we are witness to a merciless struggle which lasts until a happy compromise satisfies all tendencies." Evidently, Louchette embodied this compromise. The portrait Baudelaire drew of her in the poem "My mistress is not a well known hetaira" is enough to explain why his friends considered her a monster. With her bald head, her wig, her crossed eyes, her gourd-like breasts, her lack of perfume, she was not a woman, but a female, an animal; which explains why, in her company, his psychic reflexes brought no censorship on his physical ones. The last stanza of this poem reads:

This child of Bohemia is my everything, my wealth,
My pearl, my jewel, my queen, my duchess,
The one who rocked me on her victorious lap,
And who, in her two hands, warmed my heart.

We feel that the critics have been wrong in considering

this verse as mere extravaganza to flabbergast the bourgeois readers; under the bombastic and incongruous boasting, we discern a despairing note of sincerity. While studying Baudelaire, one should always keep in mind that, under the cynical shell, there was a shy small boy who, all his life, craved a tender maternal love. Like many a humble girl, Sarah may have been great-hearted and, though she was but twenty like him, and a prostitute, she may have given him that kind of love. The word "giron" in the French text, which, for lack of a better word, we translated with "lap," is especially significant, since it is never used in French, except in connection with the image of a mother hugging a small child.

Alas, the unfortunate girl was also the one who infected him. Though Sartre as well as other critics have gone so far as to say that Baudelaire did everything he could to catch a venereal disease so as to punish his mother for not caring enough for him, we feel that this accident was a traumatic shock to his psychic system, that it reinforced the inhibitions which already hindered his manhood, and would have been enough to release the homosexuality which Professor Stekel affirms to be the only escape for the unfortunate men who are afflicted with a sentimental fixation on their mother. Baudelaire has been accused of many a sin by his detractors, but he was spared that one.

When he left for India, his Oedipus complex had made him insensitive to any feminine charms, and his adventure with Louchette had left him branded for life. He realized it when he wrote his own epitaph:

Here lies a man who, too fond of harlots,
Went at an early age to the kingdom of moles.

While in Mauritius Island, he wrote only two pieces of poetry: one, as a polite gesture to the wife of a colonist in

whose home he had spent some time; the other, dedicated to a Malabaraise, one of the lady's colored servant girls. It reveals an interest in black beauties which may have been purely esthetic, though the luck of some research scholar may bring some day to light the fact that the Malabaraise in the poem was his first colored mistress, and even the fact that she was no other than the famous Jeanne Duval.*

Since his life-long liaison with Jeanne has been studied at length by many, we will use only the facts which are of interest to throw light on the workings of Baudelaire's unconscious. Tall and slender, but with hyper-feminine charms, and with her dusky skin, her negroid—or rather her Indian features to judge from the portraits we have of her—Jeanne must have proved a Mother-Imago tolerable to his unconscious, and he experienced with her no embarrassing and distressing inhibitions. In a score of poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal* she appears as a love witch; it was not so much a direct spell that she had cast on him, but she had worked an indirectly powerful witchcraft in releasing him from his Oedipus complex, and, undoubtedly, it is to her that he may be thankful for having retained his heterosexuality. We can easily realize the gratitude of this prisoner suddenly freed and able to enjoy the wealth of sensuous pleasure offered by the sorceress who had released him. He gorged himself, and his first poems to her are a Paean song in which he celebrates the beauty, the ardor, the science of the woman whom he called so rightly, even when he was writing to his mother "ma femme."

We read in *Parfum exotique* (Exotic perfume):

When, my eyes tightly closed, on warm nights,
I breathe the fragrance of your generous breasts,
I see, floating away, mirages of happy shores
That the monotone of their sun fires with sparkles.

*This is the subject of an article to be published in *Le Bayou*, French quarterly review published by the University of Houston.

in *La Chevelure* (The mane of hair):

Blue-black hair, Eros' lodge hung with darkness,
You evoke for me an immense round azure sky.
In the dawning ends of your curly locks, ardently,
I get drunk with the mingled smells
Of coconut oil, and musk and tar.

For a long time! for ever! my hand in your gorgeous mane
Will scatter rubies, and pearls, and sapphires,
For never must you grow dead to my lust.
Are you not the oasis where I dream, and the gourd
From which I slowly drain the wine of memories?

and in *Sed non satiata* (Yet unsatiated):

To the wine of Constance and of Nuits, to opium,
I prefer the philter of your amorous lips.
When my desires toward you line up as a caravan,
Your eyes are the cisterns from which my worries drink.

Unfortunately, Baudelaire's high hopes and rapture did not last long. The title of the last piece mentioned speaks for itself and needs no more explanation than that other poem, the first line of which is:

The whole world, you would put on your couch,
You impure woman!

Jeanne was a nymphomaniac; she cheated on him basely, giving herself to every man who wanted her. Though aware of her betrayals, he forgave her time after time. She even went farther. She had a beautiful blond servant whose behaviour in public revealed that she was more to Jeanne than a servant. Not only did the poet accept the situation, but curious about all manifestations of perverse love, he profited by what went on under his roof, probably under his own eyes, since the first title he had selected for his book of poems was *Les Lesbiennes*.

Baudelaire was so well aware of the crushing and shameful yoke imposed on him by his dusky mistress that, in 1851, af-

ter eight years with her, he cried in the last verse of *De profundis clamavi*:

I envy the fate of the vilest beasts
Who can lose themselves in stupid sleep,
So slowly unwinds the skein of time.

It was about that time that he made a serious effort to disengage himself from the hold Jeanne had on him; he stopped cohabiting with her, and we find him courting three other women and writing verses for them. It was then also that he started indulging heavily in narcotics which inspired some of his poems as well as his book *Paradis Artificiels* dedicated to one of the women mentioned above, a Mme. J.G.F. Very little is known about her, though François Porché believes her to be a Mme. Juliette Gex-Fagon quite well known in the artistic society which Baudelaire frequented as much as the literary society of his time, perhaps even more. The last words of the dedication referring to her "light and maternal hand calming his upset sleep" prompt us to believe that whoever J.G.F. may have been, she was but a friend to the poet.

In his efforts to replace Jeanne, he unconsciously looked for women who were to replace, not Jeanne, but his mother by whom he felt completely rejected since she had followed the general who, for years, had been ambassador in Constantinople first, then in Madrid. Mme. J.G.F. as well as Marie Daubrun and Mme. Sabatier, the other women in his life at the time, assumed the characteristics of mother substitutes. Porché leads us to believe that J.G.F. had copper-colored hair, while most critics before him thought she resembled Jeanne a great deal. A fair type would make her fall into the right pattern of the poet's mind at that very time, since the actress Marie Daubrun was a fair-skinned blonde while Mme. Sabatier had light chestnut hair with a fair

complexion; moreover the two of them were magnificently built women who remind us of the first stanza of *Les Phares* (The beacons), written at that period:

Rubens, river of oblivion, garden of laziness,
Pillows of young flesh that kill all passion,
But where life richly flows and stirs unceasingly
As the air in the sky, and the waves in the sea.

Thus Mme. Sabatier, Marie Daubrun and perhaps J.G.F. were in complete contrast with the negro succuba who had held him a slave for ten years. They were the prototype of the purest white race, these Rubens type women. They inspired in him the spiritual love which he had preserved for his mother, while Jeanne was the object of his physical hunger. But since Jeanne, for the time being, was in disgrace, Marie and Mme. Sabatier, who represented the idealized image of his beloved mother, became also the object of his unconscious incestuous love; yet he never became their lover.

Though certain precise details reveal that, in the intimacy of her backstage dressing room, Marie let him enjoy the esthetic pleasure of admiring her statuesque nude beauty, and even went so far as to kiss him passionately, she remained faithful to her lover, the poet Théodore de Banville. A letter exists which shows that Baudelaire, not only was perfectly aware of the liaison between Marie and Banville who was a good friend of his, but he had been made quite happy by Marie's refusal to surrender to his love. The tone of the entire letter as well as the use of the words "sister," "mother" and "Madonna" applied to Marie, are significant; the actress would have cruelly embarrassed him, had she accepted to become his mistress, when all he really wanted of her was someone to be a mother to him. This explains why the feelings expressed in most of his poems to Marie are spiritual, though in some he called her a soft enchantress as

well as a beautiful and adorable witch. The following verse of *Chant d'Automne* is quite characteristic of his true feelings toward her:

And yet love me, tender heart; be a mother
Even to him who was ungrateful and mean.
Mistress or sister, have the passing sweetness
Of a glorious autumn or a setting sun.

The well known lyrical piece *Invitation au voyage* which the poet dedicated to no one has been attributed by the critics to different women; it is our opinion that it was inspired by his love for Marie, for we recognize in it the same gentle, simple, somewhat teasing tone which characterizes other poems he wrote for her.

The third woman, Mme. Sabatier, whom her friends had nicknamed "la Présidente," was the mistress of a financier. Extremely intelligent, she had a salon frequented by the best writers of the period. For four years, anonymously, the poet sent her verses. Though, eventually, she learned who the author was, she remained a party to the deception; but she was extremely touched by the ardent devotion of the timid man who ate dinner at her table every Sunday. In those verses, he would call her "the very beautiful, the very good, the very dear," and he would ask her to remain "the guardian angel, the Muse, the Madonna" of her secret admirer. Circumstances connected with the suit filed by the government against *Les Fleurs du Mal* which contained some of the poems addressed to Mme. Sabatier, forced him to reveal the truth, and he confessed his devotion in these terms: "You are more than a cherished image, object of my dreams; you are my superstition. When I do something really foolish, I think: *Goodness! if she knew!* But when I do something good, I think: *Here is something which brings me closer to her, in spirit.*" (These words were underlined by the poet.)

The lovely Présidente who had not been lucky in her love life and never had had a lover with such fine, tender, delicate feelings, decided to reward her poet by offering him what he had never asked of her, either in his poems, or even in his letter in which she had not understood his desire to remain on the spiritual plane. A letter from the Présidente and one from Baudelaire two weeks later show that he reluctantly went to the rendez-vous she had imposed on him, but they had not become lovers. In her letter we read: "My anger was legitimate. What can I think when I see you refuse my caresses, except that your mind is still filled by the other one whose black face and black soul come to stand between you and me?"

These words show that the intelligent and passionate Mme. Sabatier had realized the important role played by the old black mistress who, henceforth, was the symbol of the barrier raised against the incestuous tendency of his libido which was still trying to be satisfied. In Mme. Sabatier, as in Marie Daubrun, he loved no one but his mother; they were mother-images; the emotional transference of affect from his mother to them released the censorship expected of any decent well-bred man, since his incestuous love had been repressed in childhood and was associated with an idea of religious and social guilt. Jeanne Duval, the psychic compromise accepted fifteen years before, had been transformed into a new inhibition which stopped him in his flight toward Mme. Sabatier, that is to say toward Beauty and Good; he was similar to the wretched albatross (in the poem of the same name) which, seventeen years before, he had seen rooted to the deck of the ship that was taking him to India.

In an article on Baudelaire published a year ago, Sartre states that, all his life, the poet looked for a judge who would give him the perverse voluptuousness of being constantly

found guilty; his mother, General Aupick, Mme. Ancelle, his publishers, etc., are considered as such judges by the father of existentialism. Even the giantess, in the poem of the same name, becomes the symbol of "an aristocratic society" which would have decided on the place Baudelaire should occupy in this world, that "of an animal de luxe, idle and useless, whose amusements would be protected by the seriousness of purpose of [the giants] his masters." The following verses prompt us to another interpretation:

In the days when Nature, in its powerful zest,
Conceived every day monstrous offspring,
I would have loved to live by a giant lass
As would, at a queen's feet, a voluptuous cat.

.....

And nonchalantly fall asleep in the shade of her breasts
As would, at a mountain's feet, a peaceful hamlet.

We see in them the crystallization of his overwhelming neurotic craving to cuddle, he a man, against the warm breast of a woman whose baby he wished to remain eternally, the crystallization of his anxious desire to find a feeling of tenderness and security near a beautiful woman whose statuesque figure would protect him against lustful desires, since only tall slender girls like Jeanne appealed to him sexually.

For five years, Baudelaire had struggled to free himself from the unconscious spell of his emotional fixation on his mother, as well as to escape the bonds that made him the slave of a despised mistress. Mme. Sabatier's letter reveals how completely and miserably he had failed. In 1858, he resumed living with Jeanne. The only other woman in his life was another colored girl, Berthe, whom he seems to have met in Brussels or whom he met in France shortly before his trip and took with him when he went to Belgium. Baudelairean specialists do not know any more about her than they do about Mme. J.G.F. The tone of a note written under a

sketch he made of her is too ambiguous for us to decide whether she was his mistress or only a friend. There is something atrociously fatal in Baudelaire's life, and when we study the entire scope of his neurosis, something clutches at our hearts, for we realize he was condemned to be defeated till the end. It is this ultimate defeat which was studied by Dr. Laforgue in his book *La Défaite de Baudelaire*.

Some will wonder why the poet went back to Jeanne after having succeeded in living away from her for five years. The fact that she alone could be a woman to him is not sufficient to explain this surrender, especially when we know the horror that passion had come to inspire in him. "The act of love offers a great resemblance to torture or to a surgical operation" is one of the mildest remarks registered in one of his diaries. But there are semi-conscious or unconscious reasons which help to explain his seemingly absurd attachment to her. According to Professor Stekel, it happens that a subject who has suffered a strong repression, because his mother was not free to lavish on him the care and the affection which he craved and which he thought she should have given him, takes over her role, thus converting his passive displeasure to the pleasure of giving things away. That happened to Baudelaire. Unconsciously he assumed toward Jeanne the part of a protecting mother: his mania for giving her jewels and money, and renewing her furniture when she had sold or pawned it—and that when he was in the most straitened circumstances himself—may be traced to his identification of himself with a mother. But a strong element of remorse and penance due to the law of auto-punishment runs parallel to that mother identification and contributes to explain his kindness toward an undeserving woman.

In 1848, in a letter to General Aupick, we read this astonishing confession:

With the nervous obstinacy and the violence which are characteristic of you, you have ill-treated me solely on account of an unfortunate woman *whom, for a long time, I have loved only thru duty*, nothing more. It is strange that you who, so often, spoke to me of spiritualistic sentiments and of duty, you have not understood this peculiar liaison where I have nothing to gain, and in which expiation and the desire to repay a devotion play the main part. . . . I am accomplishing a duty, or what I believe to be a duty, without bothering about commonplace ideas concerning honor, money and fortune.

We feel that this confession made, not to his mother, but quite officially to General Aupick, the head of the family, is very important and has not been completely understood by most critics. What secret, but all-powerful, cause hides behind this idea of duty brought forward by Baudelaire to excuse his attachment to a woman he no longer loved? We see two causes: his masochistic tendency which has never been stressed enough, and a feeling of remorse toward a woman whom he felt had played an important part in making him a great poet, whatever her vices might have been: in a poem which bears no title, he wrathfully confesses:

Has not the greatness of Evil in which you believe
Yourself a master, made you fall back with fright,
When nature so great in its hidden designs
Made use of you, oh woman, oh queen of sins,
Of you, —vile animal— to mold my genius?

This belief in the necessity of the tortures endured at her hands is an element of his masochism. Freud has explained that "Masochists [are those] whose longing is to suffer, in real or in symbolic form, humiliations and tortures at the hands of the loved object." Unconsciously Baudelaire cherished his sufferings at the hands of Jeanne, even when he complained about them, and though his conscious mind rebelled at being thus enslaved; numerous letters to his mother show to what extent his heart was ulcerated by the bad con-

duct as well as the stupidity and meanness of his mistress. The last poems she inspired him to write are revealing: in *Duellum*, he pictured his deadly struggle with her; in *Le Possédé* (The bewitched one), he described her mysterious power over him, which was like an enchantment; and in *Vampire*, he confessed the uselessness of his efforts to escape; *Vampire* should be quoted entire:

You who, like a knife thrust,
Entered my plaintive heart,
And who, with the power of a horde
Of demons, came, wild and adorned,

To make of my humbled mind,
Your own bed and your domain,
Infamous one to whom I am tied
As a convict to his ball and chain,

As to the cards the stubborn gambler,
As to a bottle the drunkard,
As to the worms the carrion,
Be you damned and damned again.

I begged for a swift sword
To conquer my freedom,
And asked perfidious poison
To help my cowardice.

Alas, both poison and sword
Scornfully answered:
You are not worthy to be freed
From your accursed slavery,

You fool! From her power,
Were our efforts to deliver you,
Your kisses would give life back
To the corpse of your vampire.

As for the last two stanzas of *La Chevelure* (The mane of hair), they illustrate masochism as Stekel understands this neurosis, restricted to its narrow erotic connotation. The self-contempt expressed in every one of these poems is

enough to explain the complex of remorse which is so powerful in Baudelaire and on which is grafted his craving for auto-punishment. *L'Irréparable* (The unforgivable sin) illustrates to what extent the poet experienced the pangs of remorse:

Can we stifle an old and long remorse
That lives, stirs and wriggles,
And feeds on us as the worms on the dead,
And the larvae on the oak?
Can we stifle implacable remorse?

In our opinion, many Baudelarian critics are wrong when they want to find in Baudelaire's poems nothing but a symbolic expression of the metaphysical conflict which existed in his mind between Good and Evil. It is true that many pieces are symbolical and are concerned with the ideas of Good, Evil and Death, but a great many are purely lyrical, and we should be satisfied to find in them the representation of his love, his passion, his disgust and his hatred toward the women who played an important part in his life. Baudelaire is far from being the deep thinker which too many have tried to make him. He reminds us of Flaubert in that respect: both were ambitious men who, painfully, squeezed out of their minds a few beautiful pages in which they portrayed struggles which exist in all of us: that of romanticism against realism in Flaubert, that of Mind against the Flesh in Baudelaire. They expressed them better than we would, that is all: it does not make thinkers of them!

Repressed subjects have a tendency to withdraw from a reality that hurts them, and to live in an imaginary world of their own. Baudelaire did not escape the rule. Normal children do not withdraw into imaginary worlds; they are active animals to whom exterior life is enough; it is repression that creates the disposition to dream, and develops it until it be-

comes a neurosis. We know that Baudelaire's repressions went back to early childhood. In his memoirs, we read: "Sentiment of solitude, early in childhood. In spite of a family, and especially among school friends—sentiment of an eternally lonely destiny." He was right. How could he have escaped loneliness, this man who had been forsaken by his mother, who had found no help in the woman to whom he sacrificed his life, and who could find complete happiness with no other woman? No wonder that he asked his imagination to be the solace against the disappointments and the cruelties of his everyday life!

Dr. Laforgue gives of imagination this definition which applies perfectly to Baudelaire's case: "It is the faculty of representing mentally non-existent situations . . . which are realisable, possible, or unrealisable, impossible. In the latter case [the subject] is condemned never to meet, in the objective domain, the goals to which he aspires, and therefore he pursues in his reveries uncatchable chimeras. . . . Henceforth, imagination becomes the capital function of psychism; it becomes all the more hypertrophied as the subject gets into the habit of asking more of it than of reality. . . . He becomes more and more engrossed in his imaginary world and progressively comes to the point where he transforms its elements into hallucinations to which he pretends to give all of the characteristics of reality." The tremendous psychic pressure put on Baudelaire by the effects of his Oedipus complex, the growing inner tension brought by the dissatisfaction of his life with Jeanne are enough to account for that hypertrophy of imagination explained by Dr. Laforgue. Moreover we feel instinctively that his art required him to be constantly on some emotional spree. No wonder that we see him illustrate what Freud said about phantasy making: ". . . he has evolved for himself a mental activity in which all these relinquished

sources of pleasure . . . are permitted to continue their existence. . . . There is no doubt that dwelling upon a wish-fulfillment in phantasy brings satisfaction. . . . Therefore, in phantasy, man can continue to enjoy a freedom from the grip of the external world." The problems of Beauty, Love, Suffering, Death, Good and Evil, which are closely related, were the main food of Baudelaire's day dreams. His *Hymne la Beauté* shows to what extent these problems are interwoven:

Comest thou from vast Heaven or springest thou from unfathomable depth,

Oh Beauty? Thy eyes, infernal and divine,
Pour forth blessing and crime confusedly;
And that is why you resemble so much wine.

Springest thou from dark abyss or dropest thou from the stars?
As would a dog, spellbound Fate trails thy petticoats.
At random, thou sowest disasters and raptures;
Thou rulest over all and answerest for nought.

From Satan or from God? Who cares? Angel or Siren?
Who cares? As long as thou makest,—oh velvet-eyed fairy,
Rhythm, perfume, light, oh my only queen,—
The universe seem less hateful, and time less heavy!

Had Fate allowed Baudelaire to love and to become the lover of Marie Daubrun or Mme. Sabatier, Beauty would never have become a metaphysical problem to him; but because he had loved Jeanne who was beautiful, but who also was evil, Beauty became for him a trying problem. In his memoirs Baudelaire wrote: "The eternal Venus is one of the numerous shapes assumed by the Devil."

Like Beauty, love, to him, became an instrument of the devil. Most of what has been called his thinking,—but which, to us, is merely phantasies— is devoted to love and its effects. He never gave a thought to other sentiments, to other sins. If a day-dreamer is not held back by a strict religious conscience, if he enjoys to an immoderate degree the contemplation of erotic scenes, in real life as well as in arts, if he has a

nature more given to contemplation than to action, if he is a poet, it is evident that the crystallization of his phantasies translated into poems will scandalize people with a rigid sense of morality. Sartre has called him "un voyeur," a victim of scopophilia. He was one, but not as an end as Sartre believes, but because, in his case, the passage from contemplation to action was forbidden him.

Not only voluptuous scenes, but also criminal thoughts broke through his phantasies. The word sadism has been mentioned. We rather see in his welcoming of criminal acts a desire to examine in his dreams the ultimate ending of passion. Yet it is true that, in the domain of love, Baudelaire found special delight in the most horrid sensations, confessing "We find attractiveness in the most repugnant objects." Psychiatrists are aware of such feelings among neurotics. Baudelaire is following a very logical neurotic line when he progresses from voluptuous love and even perverse passion to crime, for the extreme region, the final outcome of sexual pleasure is the desire to destroy, and an appetite for murder. Moreover, in his reveries translated into poetry, he realizes many of the unconscious tendencies of his exasperated libido; some poems concretize tremendous psychic explosions,—which leaves us with the feeling that, mentally, his was a split personality with extremes as outstanding as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. In his poem *À une Madone* he imagined the most refined bloody punishment. Love, religion and murder are perversely mixed in a macabre cocktail which reminds us of his remark: "Spaniards put into their religion the same ferocity which is natural in love." In another piece, *Une Martyre*, he pictures the results of a ghoulis murder in a wealthy setting filled with perfumed clothes and expensive furniture. On the blood-covered linens of a bed lies the corpse of a beautiful dark-haired girl whose head has been severed from the nude

trunk which reveals "the secret splendor and the fatal beauty with which Nature had endowed her." It is a marvelous poetical realization of the California Black Dahlia case. His Dr. Jekyll side prompted Baudelaire to imagine the worst in his fiendish apostrophe to the dead beauty:

This revengeful man whom, when you were alive,
You could not satisfy, in spite of so much love.
Did he quench, on your lifeless and willing flesh
The immensity of his lust?

Answer, impure corpse! And when his feverish arm
Lifted you by your stiffened plaits of hair,
Tell me, frightful head, did he on your cold teeth
Glue, in a kiss, a supreme farewell?

The truth revealed by such verses cannot be denied. The man whose imagination dwelled on such perverse thoughts was a neurotic with a split personality which, fortunately, was contemplative and not active. Every human being has occasional impulses to wound and even to kill. But, during childhood, religious and social teaching builds in our conscious a censorship mechanism which pushes such impulses back into the unconscious. Baudelaire did not deny altogether those impulses because, in many ways, he had not outgrown the infantile stage; fortunately he gave vent to his appetite for lust and murder only in the comparatively harmless way of writing poems picturing his wildest phantasies. Another of such pieces is the well known *La Charogne* (The Carrion) in which he points out to some woman friend the decomposition that will set worms to eat her corpse after her death. Let us not forget this notation in his memoirs: "Torture was born in the infamous part of a man's heart thirsty for voluptuousness. Cruelty and voluptuousness, identical sensations like extreme heat and extreme cold."

Another factor that led him to such thoughts in relation to love is the fact that, to him, passion was the supreme sin. In

Fusées, a diary written in his thirties, we read: "The unique and supreme voluptuousness of passion consists in the certitude of doing something *evil*. And from the very moment of their birth, men and women are aware that no voluptuousness can be found except in evil." These words reveal how deeply his mother's early religious teaching had imbedded in his soul the concept of the original sin. He also remarked: "There are in every man, at all times, two simultaneous postulations, one toward God, one toward Satan. The invocation to God, or spirituality, is a wish to be promoted; that toward Satan, or animality, is a joy to be demoted. It is with this one that our love for women is connected. . . ." This bitter denunciation of women mingled with the exposé of such a metaphysical problem shows that extreme rancor against them which explodes in every page of his memoirs. But he revealed his true colors when he expressed himself as harshly about spiritual love as he had about passion in this series of notations:

"What is Love?
 The need of getting out of oneself.
 Man is an adoring animal.
 To adore is to sacrifice and to prostitute oneself.
 So every love is a prostitution.
 Irremovable liking for prostitution in man's heart, from which
 comes his horror of solitude. He wishes to be *two*.
 The man of genius wants to be *one*, therefore lonely.
 It is this horror of solitude, the necessity for forgetting one's
 Ego in another's flesh, that one calls nobly, *the need to love*."

Though these haughty and bitter remarks do not seem to fit with what we brought out of his desire to find a mate who would love him, and whom he would love, both spiritually and physically, it is because that desire was unconscious; yet he was vaguely aware of it. Ever since he was eight, he had built up in his mind the belief that he was a lonely man, a Saint-Anthony or a René, and he had tried to impress it on

those who lived around him: "Morally as well as physically, I always had the sensation of an abyss . . . I have cultivated my hysteria with delight and terror." How could he allow this mask of haughty loneliness, this well-cultivated hysteria to be torn by the need he experienced for love? He had set himself apart from the world, and he had to keep carefully the distances he had set. How right he was when he made the following remark: "I cannot refrain from admiring the diabolic care with which men of imagination delight in multiplying their suffering and their worries"! He did not realize that unconsciously he was craving for the security of a woman's love; his conscious prevented him from admitting it, even to himself, for it would have been too crushing a defeat for his Ego. He wrote that "there were but three respectable men: the priest, the soldier, the poet: to know, to kill, to create." We easily realize the connection which he saw between them: only they are lonely men; only they can cultivate their Ego; and Baudelaire's Ego was tremendous. I bear Ben Hecht no admiration, but there is in *A Guide to the Bedevilled* a definition of the Ego which applies perfectly to Baudelaire's:

The Ego is a ferocity for identification that exists in all of us. Deeper than our lusts and all our good and bad hungers, is this obsession to be someone. . . . We clamor to acquire a meaning, to participate, however humbly in the world of ideas and events, to hold opinions that will make us significant . . . to lift ourselves out of a herd-loneliness that eternally engulfs us. . . .

Like all neurotics, like his spiritual brother Edgar A. Poe, Baudelaire thought that his case was unique and he firmly believed in his own unrecognized superiority: "Nations have great men only in spite of themselves; therefore a great man is victorious over his entire nation." Statements of this kind are numerous in his diaries. On the one hand, he had not found in his mother nor in other women the love he sought;

on the other hand his efforts to persuade those who lived near him that he was superior to them had discouraged all real friendships; and finally, the food which he fed his mind was extremely poor, reduced as it was to love, passion, good, evil and death. These three factors had combined to create a complete mental solitude from which was born the overwhelming, crushing ennui which inspired in him many poems. The following verses from the prologue to *Les Fleurs du Mal* are well known:

Among the jackals, the panthers, the hound-bitches,
The monkeys, the scorpions, the vultures, the snakes,
The yapping, howling, growling, crawling monsters
In the infamous menagerie of our vices,

There is one, uglier, meaner, filthier!
Though he makes no wild gesture or wild outcry,
He would eagerly reduce the earth to a shamble
And in a yawn would swallow the whole world;

It is Ennui.

and no one who has ever read his poems can forget this verse from *Spleen*:

And without drums or music, long hearses
Slowly parade in my soul; vanquished
Hope weeps, and atrocious, despotic Anguish
Over my humbled skull hoists its black banner.

For his last ten years, this despised ennui was to be the climate of his soul, which explains why we find in his letters so much mention of his desire to commit suicide. We find this embittered remark in his diary: "Such darkness! Such vacuum around me! Such moral darkness and such fears for the future!"

It is a well known fact that neurotics, prisoners of the vacuum they created around them, recreate inside themselves the external world they have tried so hard to shut out, and

often revert to a religious sentiment. It happened to Baudelaire; but, in spite of the lofty theories that Catholic writers have built up on his return to God, we soon realize that his new religious soul is no different from that of the small boy of yore. Baudelaire never matured, in any way. He was one of these numerous men who, under a mask of worldliness, of superiority, of cynicism, hide an infantile mind capable only of infantile reactions. His is a case of neurotic arrested mental and sentimental development. His amazing Ego is that of a repressed child with an inferiority complex which prompts him to bully his little companions. Baudelaire's religion is still a childish faith. When Anatole France wrote: "His morality does not differ much from that of theologians," he did not realize how true his statement was: Baudelaire's idea of Good and Evil was the same at forty as the one he had at six when his mother was teaching him catechism; he still was a small boy who wished to do good so as to please God, but who found it much more interesting to follow Satan's path, —and that in spite of his fear of Hell. We cannot take him seriously when, in 1858, he wrote his mother about her confessor: "This priest did not even realize that my book is based on a Catholic idea." Baudelaire had not thought about it until one of his friends had suggested it!

Religious sentiments which, to a deep thinker, would have become a vital intellectual element, only titillated pleasantly his mind. He was not unaware of the power inherent in it since he wrote in his diary: "There is in prayer a magical operation. Prayer is one of the great forces of intellectual dynamics." But this is merely a statement of facts, and God never became anything but meager meat for his reveries. At forty years of age, we find him jotting down infantile remarks of this type: "To make sure to say, every morning, my prayer to God, source of all strength and all justice, and my

prayers to Father, to Mariette and to Poe as intercessors, to pray them to send me the necessary strength to do my duty, and to keep my mother long enough in life so she can enjoy the changes in me."

We know that these changes never materialized; they were some of the chimeras which filled the day dreams that had become his real life. They had become to him what hashish was to the addicts he had studied in *Les Paradis Artificiels*: "Hashish, like all solitary pleasures, renders the individual useless to men, and society superfluous to the individual, prompting him to admire himself unceasingly, and pushing him faster each day toward the luminous abyss in which he admires his Narcissus' face." His lifelong neurosis had made of him a man with such a proud consciousness of being unlike other men, a man with such an over-developed spirit of independency, a man so decided to do without the rest of the world, that it amounted to a case of moral onanism. He was not of sufficient intellectual wealth to suffice himself, hence his efforts to endeavor to attract the attention not only of those who were close to him, but also of all his fellow men.

All his life, more or less unconsciously victim of an Oedipus complex which not only warped the natural reactions of his mind, his heart and his body, but made him eager to exaggerate this infirmity by rejecting out of his mental, physical and sentimental life everything that was natural, victim also of an inflated Ego as well as of an unbearable ennui which were but the normal effects of his sundry inhibitions, Baudelaire was his own and worst tormentor. Though, in his letters and his poems, he tried to place the blame on his mother, on his step-father, on his guardian, on his mistress, and on any other man or woman who played a part in his life, he was intelligent enough to recognize the truth. Introspection had enlightened the darkest recesses of his conscious mind, and through al-

coholic drunkenness and narcotic intoxication, he had somewhat succeeded in lowering the walls which existed between his conscious and his unconscious, and in probing into the dark abyss. He was so well aware of his own masochistic nature that he pictured it in these well known verses of *Heautontimoroumenos*:

I am the wound and the knife!
The hand that slaps and the cheek!
The broken limbs and the rack!
Both the victim and the hangman!

We really feel sorry for Baudelaire when we read this confession of his: "My mind is such a queer one that I don't know what to make of it myself!" If psychiatry had existed in the beginning of the XIXth century, perhaps General Aupick would have put his step-son in the hands of a psychoanalyst who would have been able to understand and straighten out his warped mind, and to enlighten him about his complexes and his inhibitions. Undoubtedly the young man would have mended his ways, passed the École des Chartes entrance examination, and become an excellent civil servant, writing a few verses in his moments of leisure; and the world would have lost one of its greatest poets!

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